

with our schools and our post-high school programs, and opens the doors of college education to everyone through a radical reform in the student loan program and national service. It focuses on, in other words, increasing investment, bringing down the deficit, and bringing us together as a country again. This Goals 2000 legislation is an important part of that. It is our effort to do our job here as well as you do

your job back home. If we did our job here as well as you've done yours, then America could celebrate and give itself a blue ribbon in just a few years.

Thank you very much, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:51 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

The President's News Conference May 14, 1993

The President. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I'm glad the weather permitted us to do this outside.

Three months ago, I presented a plan to our country and to the Congress designed to address what I believe were the significant challenges of this time. For more than 40 years, our country was organized to stand up against communism, to try to help develop the free world, and for most of that time we took our economic prosperity for granted. It is now clear that, at the end of the cold war, we must organize ourselves around the obligation we have to be more competitive in the global economy and to enable our people to live up to their full potential.

That means we have to do a lot of things to turn this economy around, beginning with a serious effort to reduce our national debt, to invest in jobs and new technologies, to restore fairness to our Tax Code, and to make our political system work again.

This week I was able to go back again to the American people to take my case into the country, into Cleveland and Chicago and New York. And here in Washington there were new efforts to break the gridlock and to put the national interests above narrow interests. The results were particularly impressive in the work done by the House Ways and Means Committee, achieving over \$250 billion in deficit reduction through spending cuts with \$2 in spending cuts for each dollar in new investment, in new jobs, in education. The program provides significantly everything that I presented to the Congress, even though there were some changes. In fact, some of the changes I think made the bill better.

Let me reiterate them: number one, significant deficit reduction; number two, taking on entitlements issues that have for too long been left on the table; number three, real investments for small businesses and for big businesses, incentives to get people to invest money in this economy to create jobs; and perhaps most importantly, a break for working-class families, a huge increase in the earned-income tax credit for people with incomes under \$30,000 to relieve them of the impact of the energy tax and to say for the first time, people who work 40 hours a week with children in the home would be lifted above poverty; and finally, of course, the plan was very progressive, 75 percent of the revenues coming from the top 6 percent of the American taxpayers.

I also reiterated that I don't want a penny in taxes without the spending cuts. And I proposed in New York that we create a deficit reduction trust fund into which all the taxes and all the budget cuts could be put and kept for the 5-year life of this budget. This is a very important thing. I realize some have said it is little more than a gimmick, but the truth is there is no legal protection now for the life of the budget for these funds. This will provide it in stone, in law.

In every element of this, there has been some willingness on the part of those who have supported our efforts to take on powerful vested interest in behalf of the national interest, whether it is in repealing the lobby deduction or in going for a direct loan program for college loans that will save \$4 billion but which will remove a Government-guaranteed income from several interests who like the system as it is now.

The Congress also moved this week to reinvigorate our democratic process by ending the filibuster and passing the motor voter bill. These are the kinds of changes that the American people expect of us. They do not expect miracles, but they expect solid, steady progress, and I am determined to stay on this course.

It has been a good week, and if we're willing to take more tough decisions, there will be more good weeks for the American people ahead.

Bosnia

Q. Mr. President, you've said that the United States will not go it alone with military action in Bosnia. And yet, the European allies have refused to sign on to your proposals. If the allies refuse to follow suit, where does that leave the United States?

The President. Let me reiterate what I have said because I think that the United States has taken the right position, and I think that we've gotten some good results. I have said, and I will reiterate, I think that the United States must act with our allies, especially because Bosnia is in the heart of Europe, and the Europeans are there. We must work together through the United Nations.

Secondly, I do not believe the United States has any business sending troops there to get involved in a conflict in behalf of one of the sides. I believe that we should continue to turn up the pressure. And as you know, I have taken the position that the best way to do that would be to lift the arms embargo with a standby authority of air power in the event that the present situation was interrupted by the unfair use of artillery by the Bosnian Serbs. That position is still on the table. It has not been rejected out of hand. Indeed, some of our European allies have agreed with it, and others are not prepared to go that far yet.

But we have to keep the pressure up. And I would just remind you that since we said we would become involved in the Vance-Owen peace process, two of the three parties have signed on. We've gotten enforcement of the no-fly zone through the United Nations. We've been able to airlift more humanitarian supplies there, and we've been able to keep up a very, very tough embargo on Serbia which I think led directly, that and the pressure of further action, to the statement that Mr. Milosevic made to the effect that he would stop supporting the Bosnian Serbs.

Where we go from here is to keep pushing in the right direction. As we speak here, the United Nations is considering a resolution which would enable us to place United Nations forces along the border between Serbia and Bosnia to try to test and reinforce the resolve of the Milosevic government to cut off supplies to the Bosnian Serbs. If that resolution passes, and in its particulars it makes good sense, that is a very good next step. We're just going to keep working and pushing in this direction. And I think we'll begin to get more and more results.

Q. Are you contemplating sending U.S. forces to Macedonia and perhaps to protect safe havens in Bosnia?

The President. On the question of Macedonia, the Defense Department has that and many other options under review for what the United Nations, what the allies could do to make sure that we confine this conflict, to keep it from spreading. I've not received a recommendation from them and, therefore, I've made no decision.

Helen [Helen Thomas, United Press International]?

Q. Mr. President, there is a wide spread perception that you're waffling, that you can't make up your mind. One day you're saying, "In a few days we'll have a decision. We have a common approach." The next day you're saying, "We're still looking for a consensus." Will American troops be in this border patrol that the U.N. is voting on and, you know, where are we?

The President. Well, first of all, I have made up my mind, and I've told you what my position was. And I've made it as clear as I can. But I also believe it is imperative that we work with our allies on this. The United States is not in a position to move unilaterally, nor should we. So that is the answer to your question.

The resolution being considered by the United Nations I think contemplates that the UNPROFOR forces would be moved and expanded and moved to the border. At this time there has been no suggestion that we would be asked to be part of those forces.

Susan [Susan Spencer, CBS News]?

Homosexuals in the Military

Q. A domestic question. Could you tell us how were you affected by the testimony of Colonel Fred Peck, whose son is a homosexual, who said that, nonetheless, he could not in good con-

science support lifting the ban?

The President. I thought all the testimony given in that hearing—I saw quite a lot of it from more than one panel—was quite moving and straightforward. I still think the test ought to be conduct.

Q. Does this allow for the possibility of the “don’t ask, don’t tell”—the compromise that would allow—

The President. You know what my position is. I have nothing else to say about it.

Bosnia

Q. Mr. President, you said last week that if you went to air power in Bosnia you would have a clear strategy and it would have a beginning, middle, and end. What happens, though, sir, if a plane is shot down, if you lose a pilot or a couple of pilots, or if the Bosnian Serbs decide to escalate the conflict, or the Serbians by going into, say, Kosovo?

The President. Well, the Bush administration before I became President issued a clear warning to the Serbs that if they try to occupy Kosovo and repress the Albanians there, that the United States would be prepared to take some strong action. And I have reaffirmed that position. As a general proposition, you can never commit American forces to any endeavor on the assumption that there will be no losses. That is just simply not possible, and as the Pentagon will tell you, we lose forces even now in peace time simply in the rigorous training that our Armed Forces must undertake.

Homosexuals in the Military

Q. In the debate on homosexuals in the military, you use the word “conduct” as though it were an absolute and easily definable term. Do you believe, one, that homosexuals should be celibate, as Schwarzkopf suggested, or could they engage in homosexual activity, consenting, on or off base; or two, should the uniform code be allowed to have any sort of difference between its treatment of homosexuals and heterosexuals?

The President. I support the present code of conduct, and I am waiting for the Pentagon to give me its recommendations.

Brit [Brit Hume, ABC News]?

Lani Guinier

Q. Your nominee to head the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division has expressed what

many regard as rather striking views about voting rights and a number of other areas, including expressing some misgivings about the principle of one man, one vote. And I wonder if you are familiar with all these views and if you support them, and if you do not, why you chose her?

The President. I nominated her because there had never been a full-time practicing civil rights lawyer with a career in civil rights law heading the Civil Rights Division. I expect the policy to be made on civil rights laws by the United States Congress, and I expect the Justice Department to carry out that policy. Insofar as there is discretion in the policy, that discretionary authority should reside either in the President or the Attorney General in terms of what policies the country will follow. I still think she’s a very well-qualified civil rights lawyer, and I hope she will be confirmed. And I think she has every intention of following the law of the land as Congress writes it.

Carl [Carl Leubsdorf, Dallas Morning News]?

Q. Were you familiar with them when you—

Texas Senatorial Election

Q. Mr. President, as you know, there is a lot of concern in the Democratic Party and in the White House about the upcoming Senate election in Texas. And one of your top political advisers, Paul Begala, is becoming more involved down there. Do you see any expanded role for yourself? Is there anything you can do, or are you all pretty much resigned to losing this seat?

The President. Well, first of all, I’m not resigned to losing it. I think Bob Krueger can still win the race. But it depends on, as with all cases, it depends on how he frames the issues, how his opponent frames the issues, and what happens there. I think he’s a good man, and I think he’s capable of doing a good job. And I think he could still win the race. But that’s up for the people of Texas. You know, in the primary, one of the big problems was 25 percent of the Republicans turned out and only 15 percent of the Democrats did. I don’t know what’s going to happen there. But I certainly support him, and I hope he will prevail. I think it would be good for the people of Texas and the Congress if he did.

Q. Do you expect to do any more for him and possibly go down there?

The President. No one’s discussed that with

me. You know, I don't know. I've always been skeptical about the question of whether any of us could have any impact on anyone else's race. I've never seen it happen up or down in my own State in Arkansas. There may be some ways we can help with fundraising and things of that kind, but all the time I ran at home I never let anybody come in to help me, whatever the national politics were.

Inflation

Q. Mr. President, what would you say or what do you say to Federal Reserve officials who are arguing for a slight rise in short-term interest rates because they're concerned about resurging inflation?

The President. I would say that the month before last we have virtually no inflation, and you can't run the country on a month-to-month basis. You've got to look at some longer trends. There are some clear underlying reasons for this last inflationary bulge which don't necessarily portend long-term inflation. I think it's a cause of concern. We ought to look at it, but we ought to wait until we have some more evidence before we raise interest rates in an economy where industrial capacity is only at 80 percent.

If you look at all the underlying long-term things, long-term trends in energy prices, industrial capacity, the kinds of things that really shape an economy, there is no reason at this time to believe that there could be any cause for a resurge in inflation.

Q. Sir, the argument is made at the Federal Reserve that higher taxes, higher burdens on business through health care fees, or other things like that will indeed raise inflation while the economy stays weak.

The President. Just a few weeks ago some people were arguing that all this would be deflationary and would repress the recovery. So I guess you can find an expert to argue any opinion, but there is no evidence of that. The prevailing opinion at the Fed and the prevailing opinion in the economic community has been that the most important thing we can do is to bring down long-term interest rates by bringing down the deficit. You can't have it both ways. You're either going to bring down the deficit, or we're not. And everything in life requires some rigorous effort if you're going to have fundamental change.

Small Business Exports

Q. I wonder if you ever stop to think that this month we are celebrating two events, Small Business Week and World Trade Week. I wonder do you understand what the importance of the world trade in this week is in the minority and small business people can contribute to export their services and product to the world and mainly to those countries of the former Soviet Union? How do you respond?

The President. How do I want small business to contribute? Well, first of all, an enormous amount of our economic growth in the last 3 years has come out of growth in trade. And one of the problems we're having with our own recovery is that economic growth is virtually nonexistent in Asia and in Europe—at least in Japan and in Europe, not in the rest of Asia. China is growing rapidly.

One of the things that we can do to increase exports is to organize ourselves better in the small business community. The Germans, for example, have enormously greater success than do we in getting small and medium sized businesses into export markets. And one of the charges of my whole trade team is to organize the United States so that we can do that. That's one of the things the Commerce Secretary is working on.

Northern Ireland

Q. Mr. President, you're going to be meeting with the President of Ireland in a little while. And as a—

The President. I'm looking forward to it.

Q. —as a candidate, you made several promises in regard to Ireland. One of them was to send an envoy, a special peace envoy, and another was that you would not restrict Gerry Adams' admittance into this country. He's the leader of Sinn Fein, and his visa was denied last week. And you promised that as President he would be admitted.

The President. I think you ought to go back and read my full statement that I made in New York about the Adams case. I'll answer that in a minute.

But let me—first on the peace envoy, I talked to the Prime Minister of Ireland, and I will discuss with the President of Ireland what she thinks the United States can do. I am more than willing to do anything that I can that will be a constructive step in helping to resolve the crisis in Northern Ireland.

Q. [Inaudible]—whether an envoy is necessary because—

The President. I don't believe the President of the United States should be unaffected by what the Prime Minister or the President of Ireland believe about what is best for Ireland. I don't believe that. I think I should ask them what they believe. I'm not sure I know better than she does about that. And I should listen and should take it into account. I am prepared to do whatever I can to contribute to a resolution of this issue.

On the Gerry Adams question, I said at that time because he was a Member of Parliament, if I were President I would review that. I thought that if there were no overwhelming evidence that he was connected to terrorists, if he was a duly elected Member of Parliament in a democratic country, we should have real pause before denying him a visa. I asked that his case be reviewed by the State Department and others. And everybody that reviewed it recommended that his visa not be granted and pointed out that he was no longer a Member of Parliament.

Wolf [Wolf Blitzer, Cable News Network]?

President's Approval Ratings

Q. Mr. President, in your opening statement, you said this has been a good week for you. But the latest CNN/USA Today/Gallop poll, as you probably saw, shows a 10 percent decline in your job approval rating since the end of April, from 55 to 45 percent. Why do you think that is happening? And is it your fault, and what can be done?

The President. Well, for one thing, I'm trying to do hard things. And I can't do hard things and conduct an ongoing campaign at the same time. You know, I'm doing things that are hard, that are controversial. And anybody who doesn't want to assume responsibility can stand on the sidelines and criticize them. I never expected that I could actually do anything about the deficit without having some hits. I never expected that I could take on some of these interests that I've taken on without being attacked. And whenever you try to change things, there are always people there ready to point out the pain of change without the promise of it. That's just all part of it.

If I worried about the poll ratings I'd never get anything done here. The only thing I'd remind you is for 12 years we've seen politicians

and the Congress and the executive branch worry about their poll ratings every month and then at the end of every 4 years things are a lot worse. If things are better at the end of the period that I was given to serve, then the poll ratings now won't make any difference. And if they're not, they won't make any difference. So my job is to do my job, and let the chips fall where they may.

Bosnia

Q. There seems to be a Catch 22 emerging on Bosnia. One would be, you have consistently said that you want to have a consensus with the U.S. allies. But until that consensus is formed, you found it seems very difficult to explain to the American people precisely how that war should be defined: Is it a civil war? Is it a war of aggression? And also not necessarily what the next step should be, but what are the principles, the overriding principles that should guide you as a policy? What can you tell the American people right now about that?

The President. First, that is both a civil war and a war of aggression, because Bosnia was created as a separate legal entity. It is both a civil war where elements of people who live within that territory are fighting against one another. And there has been aggression from without, somewhat from the Croatians and from the Serbs, principally from the Serbs—that the inevitable but unintended impact of the arms embargo has been to put the United Nations in the position of ratifying an enormous superiority of arms for the Bosnian Serbs that they got from Serbia, and that our interest is in seeing, in my view at least, that the United Nations does not foreordain the outcome of a civil war. That's why I've always been in favor of some kind of lifting of the arms embargo, that we contain the conflict, and that we do everything we can to move to an end of it and to move to an end of ethnic cleansing.

Those are our interests there, and those are the ones I'm trying to pursue. But we should not introduce American ground forces into the conflict in behalf of one of the belligerents, and we must move with our allies. It is a very difficult issue. I realize in a world where we all crave for certainty about everything, it's tough to deal with, but it's a difficult issue.

Andrea [Andrea Mitchell, NBC News]?

Q. Mr. President, on the subject of the arms embargo, do you believe that the fighting be-

tween the Croats and the Muslims has validated the European objections to your proposal to lift the arms embargo, showing just how complicated it is and how easily those weapons can get into other hands? And, secondly, do you think that you should try to level the playing field by using air strikes alone if your hands are tied on the arms embargo?

The President. I believe that the troubles between the Croatians and the Muslims complicate things, but at least the leaders have agreed on an end to the conflict. On the other issue, I think that the best use of air power is the one that I have outlined, and I don't favor another option at this time.

Norway

Q. The Prime Minister of Norway today announced that Norway is going to resume commercial hunt of the minke whale. How do you react to that? And is the United States going to take any punitive actions against Norway?

The President. It's the first I've heard of it. I'll have to give you a later answer.

White House Staff

Q. One of the charges leveled by critics of you in Arkansas and now at the beginning of your term as President is that you've surrounded yourself with too many young people and put them in too many senior positions. How do you respond to that criticism?

The President. Like Lloyd Bentsen and Warren Christopher? I mean, who are you referring to? Mr. McLarty, Mr. Rubin, Ms. Rasco, and Mr. Lake, to name four, and I are all, I think, older than our counterparts were when President Kennedy was President. There are a lot of young people who work here, but most of the people in decisionmaking positions are not particularly young. And I am amazed sometimes—you think I ought to let some of them go?

I realize that there is this image that the administration is quite young. I think we have one of the most seasoned and diverse Cabinets that anybody's put together in a long time. And we have a lot of people who aren't so young working in the White House. I don't know how to answer your question about it.

Health Care Reform

Q. Mr. President, what will you do to ensure that health care will be accessible geographically

to people in inner cities and rural areas, so that cross-town and cross-county travel will not become a barrier to health care?

The President. Well, I haven't received the report, as you know, of the Health Care Task Force yet, but let me say that one of the markers I laid down for them when they began their work was that we didn't need just simply to provide coverage for Americans, but there had to be access in rural areas and in inner city areas, especially. And they are exploring any number of ways to do that.

I spent one afternoon here on a hearing on rural health care, talking about how we could bring health care to people in rural areas and make it economical and available. And I have spent an enormous amount of time in the last 16 months in urban health care settings trying to discover which model—I've done that myself—trying to determine which models can be replicated in other inner city areas. From my experience at home I knew more about rural areas. But the bottom line is you've got to have more clinics in the rural areas and in the inner cities that are accessible and where there is an ethnic diversity, where they are accessible not only physically but in terms of language and culture. And these things can be done. And if you do it right, if they're really comprehensive primary and preventive health care centers, they lower the cost of health care because they keep more people out of the emergency rooms.

Bosnia

Q. Mr. President, the Serbian government has indicated it is going to stop sending arms to the Bosnian Serbs. If they hold true to that, does that then preclude the option of rearming the Bosnian Muslims?

The President. Well, I have two responses. First, I hope the United Nations resolution will succeed so that we can put some U.N. people on the border to determine whether that, in fact, is occurring. Secondly, whether that precludes the rearming option depends really on how many arms have been stashed already in Bosnia, particularly the heavy weapons, the heavy artillery. I think that is the issue. And that's a fact question which we'll have to try to determine.

Latin America

Q. Many people wonder, Mr. President, what your policy in Latin America is going to be.

Your economic team just told us that you want to spend more money in police here in the United States. The past administration spent almost \$3 billion in Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia. What is your vision, and how are you going to change that policy?

The President. I think we should continue to support those programs. I can't say that they would be immune from the budget cutting process that has affected almost all of our domestic programs here. We've had such a big deficit, we've got to cut across-the-board. But I believe that those programs have served a useful purpose. I think especially where we have governments with leaders who are willing to put their lives on the line to stop or slow down the drug trade, we ought to be supporting them, and I expect to do that.

David [David Lauter, Los Angeles Times]?

Domestic Priorities

Q. You've been talking a lot recently about deficit reduction, the deficit reduction trust fund. You're talking now about having to stretch out your investment programs, postpone some of the things. What do you say to people in urban areas, some of the liberal Congressmen on the Hill who say, "Wait a minute. We're the ones who elected this guy, and now the programs that have been starved for 12 years that we need aren't going to be able to get money?" What sort of political position does that put you in with your core supporters?

The President. Well, I ask them, first of all, to look at the 5 year budget. The enormous squeeze on domestic spending including investment spending began 12 years ago. I can't turn it around overnight. I asked them to look at the 5 year budget and look at it in light of the fact that the deficit numbers were revised upward after the election by \$50 billion a year in 3 of the next 4 years. And I ask them also to consider this: Until we can prove that we have the discipline to control our budget, I don't think we'll have the elbow room necessary to have the kind of targeted investments we need.

I think the more we do budget control, the more we'll be free to then be very sharply discriminating in investing in those things which actually do create jobs. I don't think we have any other option at this time.

Attitudes Toward Change

Q. Mr. President, in your New York speech this past week at Cooper Union, you spoke of

a crisis of belief and hope. And earlier Mrs. Clinton in a speech talked about a crisis of meaning. How do you see these crises manifesting themselves? What are the causes of them? And how severe do you see this?

The President. Well, I think they manifested themselves in people's honest feelings that things are not going very well in this country and that they haven't gone very well in a long time and the alienation people feel from the political process and in the alienation they often feel from one another in the same neighborhoods and communities. There are real objective reasons for a lot of these problems. After all, for most people the work week is lengthening, and incomes are declining. The job growth of the country has been very weak. The crime rate is high, and there's a sense of real alienation there. And I don't think we can speak to them just with programs. I think that, in our different ways, that's what both Hillary and I were trying to say.

The thing I was trying to say to the American people at the Cooper Union that I want to reiterate today is that you can never change if you have no belief in the potential of your country, your community, or yourself, and that the easy path is cynicism. The easy path is to throw rocks. The better path is doing the hard work of change.

The thing I liked about what happened in the Ways and Means Committee this week is—not that I agree with every last change they made in the bill, although some of them actually made the bill better, all the fundamental principles were left intact—but we actually did something to move the ball forward, to deal with the deficit, to deal with the investment needs, to deal with—to go back to the other question that Mr. Lauter asked—to deal with the need to get more real investment in the inner cities and the rural areas of the country. We are doing things.

And what I tried to do all throughout the campaign in talking about hope, in talking about belief, in trying to go back to the grassroots was to say to people, the process of change may be uneven and difficult and always controversial, but it has to be buttressed by an underlying belief that things can be made better.

When the election returns in November—that I was not fully responsible for, there were two other candidates in that race—which showed a

big increase in voter turnout, especially among young people, that meant to me that we were beginning to see the seeds of a change in attitude. As I said at the Cooper Union, when President Kennedy occupied that office, nearly three-quarters of the American people believed that their leaders would tell them the truth and that their institutions worked and that their problems could be solved. So there was a lot more elbow room there. You know, a year or 2 years could go by, people could be working on something with maybe only slightly measurable progress, but the country felt it was moving forward. That is what we have to restore today, a sense that it can be done. And it cannot be done by the President alone, but the President has to keep saying that, that faith is a big part of this.

Q. And the causes of these crises as you perceive them?

The President. I think the causes of them are the persistent, enduring problems, unanswered, unresponded to, and the absence of a feeling that there is a overall philosophy and a coherent way of dealing with them.

Tax Legislation

Q. Though your tax package has made it through the House Ways and Means Committee, every Republican voted against it. If that happens again in the Senate you could be facing yet another roadblock. How have you changed your legislative strategy to see that you win over a few Republican votes this time?

The President. Well, the budget cannot be filibustered. So in a literal sense, you know, we could pass it without any Republican votes. What I hope is that to show that by a combination of budget cuts and tax increases and the things that have been done to make this program even more attractive. We've got a lot of business people for this program now, a lot of them—that we ought to get some Republican support. But that's a political decision that a lot of those folks are going to make.

I can tell you that one member of the Ways and Means Committee told me yesterday that a Republican member said to him as they were dealing with this, said, "Boy, there's a lot of wonderful stuff in this bill. I didn't know all this stuff was in this bill. This is wonderful." He said, "Well, why don't you vote for it?" He said, "No, we've got to be against taxes."

They're going to have to decide what they're going to do about that.

NAFTA

Q. You talk about being competitive in the world and that, I hope you agree, that involves NAFTA. What would be the priorities of a new ambassador to Mexico, and what is the latest in NAFTA? Do you support tougher sanctions in trade for those that violate the treaty?

The President. I believe the treaty has to have some enforcement provisions. I have not read the last language, but it is my understanding that what the negotiators are working toward is some sort of sanctions for repeated and persistent violations of agreements that the countries involved in NAFTA make. I don't think any of us should make agreements and expect there to be no consequences to their repeated and persistent violation. But I want to say again, I believe that increased trade with Mexico and NAFTA are in the interest of the United States.

The Salinas government, through the unilateral reduction of their own tariffs, has helped to take the United States—and through policies that promoted economic growth, beginning with getting control of their deficit—has taken the United States from a \$6-billion trade deficit with Mexico to a \$5-billion trade surplus. Mexico just surpassed Japan as our second biggest trading customer for manufactured products. So I think that it's very much in our interest to pass NAFTA, and I hope I'll be able to persuade the Congress to do it when we conclude the agreement.

Q. Would that be a priority of a new ambassador to Mexico?

The President. Absolutely, sure.
Go ahead.

Webster Hubbell

Q. Okay. I'd like to go back to your Justice Department for just a second, Mr. President. Since during the campaign you said it was a mistake and, in fact, apologized for playing golf at an all-white country club in Little Rock, shouldn't it disqualify your nominee for Associate Attorney General, Webb Hubbell? Is there an exception because he's a family friend? And are the local civil rights leaders wrong when they say that his attempts to integrate the club appeared to have been a last-minute political conversion?

The President. Absolutely not.

Q. Are the local civil rights leaders wrong

when they say that his attempts to integrate the club appeared to have been a last-minute political conversion?

The President. No. As a matter of fact, if you go back—first of all, let me—the first question is no, he should not be disqualified. The second question is, is it a last-minute conversion? The African-American who joined the club testified that Webb Hubbell had been trying for years to get him to do it, and he had not agreed. That's what the record shows. Thirdly, my belief is that the overwhelming majority of African-American leaders in my State would very much like to see him confirmed. He has always had a reputation as being a strong advocate of civil rights, whether as Mayor of Little Rock or chief justice of the supreme court of my State. He is a very eminent citizen with a very good background. And I think the vast majority of the civil rights leaders of my State will advocate his appointment based on his record. And I think on the facts of this, I just wouldn't—this last-minute conversion thing just doesn't hold water.

Q. What does it say then, sir, that he should be a member of an all-white country club, as other members of your Cabinet also are or were when it was still all white?

The President. I think he should have either resigned or integrated it. And, of course, he was in the middle. He said, "I tried for years to integrate it, and it took me too long to succeed." What I think is really the case is that some of the other people may have been blocking it. He was trying for years to do it. I know that because I used to hit on him about it for years.

Go ahead, Mara [Mara Liasson, National Public Radio].

Bosnia

Q. Mr. President, I want to go back to a question that Helen asked earlier about your indecisiveness over Bosnia. I'm wondering how you think that's affected perceptions of you as a leader? There is a concern reflected in polls and in some comments from Democratic Members in Congress that you are indecisive and perhaps not tough enough to tackle all the problems.

The President. Well I'd just like to ask you what their evidence is? When "Russia" came up the United States took the lead, and we got a very satisfactory result. When I took office

I said we were going to try to do more in Bosnia. We agreed to go to the Vance-Owen peace process, and two of the three parties signed on. We got enforcement of the no-fly zone. We began to engage in multinational humanitarian aid. We got much, much tougher sanctions. We got the threat of military force on the table as a possible option. Milosevic changed his position. All because this administration did more than the previous one.

And every time I have consulted the Congress they say to me in private, this is a really tough problem. I don't know what you should do but you're the only President that ever took us into our counsel beforehand; instead of telling us what you were going to do, you actually ask us our opinion. I do not believe that is a sign of weakness. And I realize it may be frustrating for all of you to deal with the ambiguity of this problem but it is a difficult one.

I have a clear policy. I have gotten more done on this than my predecessor did. And maybe one reason he didn't try to do it is because if you can't force everybody to fall in line overnight for people who have been fighting each other for centuries, you may be accused of vacillating. We are not vacillating. We have a clear, strong policy.

In terms of the other issues, who else around this town in the last dozen years has offered this much budget cutting, this much tax increases, this much deficit reduction, and a clear economic strategy that asks the wealthy to pay their fair share, gives the middle class a break, and gives massive incentives to get new investment and new jobs in the small business community and from large business as well? I think—I don't understand what—on one day people say he's trying to do too much. He's pushing too hard. He wants too much change. And then on the other day he says, well, he's really not pushing very hard. I think we're getting good results. We've been here 3 months. We've passed a number of important bills, and I feel good about it.

I think the American people know one thing: that I'm on their side, that I'm fighting to change things. And they're finding out it's not so easy. But we are going to get a lot of change out of this Congress if we can keep our eye on the ball and stop worrying about whether we characterize each other in some way or another and keep thinking about what's good for the American people.

Every day I try to get up and think about not what somebody characterizes my action as but whether what I do will or will not help to improve the lives of most Americans. That is the only ultimate test by which any of us should be judged.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's 15th news conference began at 1:05 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With President Mary Robinson of Ireland

May 14, 1993

Ireland

Q. Madam President, do you support a peace envoy from the United States to Ireland?

President Robinson. I think it has been very much appreciated, as indeed the Taoiseach said when he met with the President on March the 17th, on St. Patrick's Day, that President Clinton has shown such an interest in and concern for Ireland. That is very well recognized in Ireland itself and that, as President, you have indicated a genuine, a real concern. And I know that when you were discussing with the Taoiseach the idea of a peace envoy that you left open this issue, because it expresses concern, and that you are aware that there are the prospects of resumed talks in Northern Ireland. And I think in those circumstances—and it is appropriate to let those talks take their course.

But the sounding of the concern, the genuine interest, and the fact that you said you were a friend not just on St. Patrick's Day but throughout the year in an interested way, that has struck a very real chord throughout the island of Ireland and an important one. And I think that's very much appreciated, now. So I think that the reality of that concern has created its own very helpful and constructive vibrations.

President Clinton. Thank you.

Perception of the Administration

Q. Mr. President, you sounded a little bit frustrated at the end of your news conference there with the perception of your administration and your Presidency.

President Clinton. I just did what I could to set the record straight. You know, in the end you're measured by whether you act or not and what you stand for and what you don't, and I think the record is pretty clear. This ad-

ministration has come out for a lot of bold and comprehensive change and is fighting for it. And if I don't say that, who will?

Q. That may be the question. *[Laughter]*

President Clinton. We haven't lost a majority vote yet. We may before it's over, but we haven't yet.

Ireland

Q. President Clinton, can I ask you a question? Are you going to visit Ireland? You're meeting the President today. Would you like—

President Clinton. I hope so. I told the President I went to Ireland once when I was a young man.

Q. 1969?

President Clinton. It was a great trip.

Q. Do you think you're going to be able to do it?

President Clinton. Did you check my passport files? Is that how you—*[laughter]*.

Q. Would you like to visit Ireland?

President Clinton. I would very much.

The First 100 Days

Q. Can I ask you about your first 100 days in office? Have you enjoyed that?

President Clinton. Very much. Even the difficult times have been good. You know, it's an exhilarating thing trying to sort of turn things around, not easy but exhilarating.

Gerry Adams

Q. Mr. President, you've gotten some heat over your Irish problems recently. Do you think looking back on what you said during the campaign and knowing what you know now about, for example, the Gerry Adams status, that you might have rephrased what you were saying?